

## FURTHER NOTES ON THE FOOD OF THE LIMPKIN

BY FRANCIS HARPER

Since the publication of recent papers on this subject (Cottam, 1936; Harper, 1936a, 1936b), some additional information has come to hand.

Bryant (1859, p. 13), in discussing the feeding habits of the Limpkin (*Aramus scolopaccus pictus*), as observed by him at Lake Dexter or on neighboring portions of the St. John's River in Florida, says: "On the St. Johns it feeds principally on a species of *Natica*, which is extremely abundant, and also on the small *Unios*. The large green snail [*Pomacea*], so common in the everglade, is not very often met with on the St. Johns."

This report of *Natica* was accepted without question by Cottam (1936, p. 12). However, Dr. H. A. Pilsbry and Mr. Richard A. McLean have called my attention to the fact that *Natica* is a marine mollusk, whose occurrence as far up the St. John's as Lake Dexter is out of the question. The most abundant component of the shell mounds in the vicinity of Lake Dexter is *Viviparus georgianus*, and apparently this is the animal that Bryant should have recorded instead of *Natica*. It does not seem to have been included in any other report on the food of the Limpkin.

Additional though purely circumstantial evidence on this point has come from the single locality in Georgia where the Limpkin is known to occur at present with any degree of regularity—Mill Creek, a tributary of the St. Mary's River in extreme southwestern Camden County. Here Frederick V. Hebard and I have failed to find any trace of *Pomacea*, the staple food of the Limpkin in nearly all parts of its range, but in the spring of 1940 John W. Burch collected a number of specimens of *Viviparus georgianus*. Cottam reports (1936, p. 12, and *in litt.*, January 9, 1941) that a Limpkin collected at Bassenger on the Kissimmee River, Florida, had eaten at least ten individuals of the genus *Campeloma*. Since this mollusk and *Viviparus georgianus* are members of the same family (Viviparidae), and since they are also of about the same size and shape, it would appear quite likely that the latter serves as a mainstay for the Limpkin in Camden County, Georgia, especially in view of the apparent absence or at least scarcity of *Pomacea* in that locality.

The foregoing evidence on the Limpkin's utilization of *Viviparus* raises the question whether this bird, as well as aboriginal man, may not have played a part in the gradual building up of the vast shell mounds along the St. John's. A point remaining to be investigated, however, is whether or not the Limpkin breaks the shell of *Viviparus* in order to secure the fleshy parts. A very large proportion of these shells in the mounds along the St. John's appear to be more or less intact. It does not break the shell of *Pomacea*.

Mr. Francis M. Weston (*in litt.*, May 8, 1938) calls my attention to the fact that in my previous paper (1936b, p. 39) Spring Creek was erroneously placed west, instead of east, of Marianna, Fla. He adds: "You might be interested to know that the Limpkin not only occurs but also nests in the upper reaches of that creek. I have also found the Limpkin nesting some miles west of Marianna, at least nine miles west of Spring Creek. . . . There seems to be no good reason why *Pomacea* and the Limpkin should not be found in the S. E. corner of Alabama and the S. W. corner of Georgia."

Hitherto the western limit of the Limpkin's known breeding range has been Wakulla County, Florida.

#### LITERATURE CITED

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### THE LAND MOLLUSCA OF COOSA COUNTY, ALABAMA

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Coosa County, Alabama, lies in the east central portion of the state. It is of particular interest in possessing a characteristic Piedmont fauna, at least insofar as the lower section of the Pied-